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Review of the problem of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in all its aspects

Letter dated 12 September 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am pleased to transmit to you the enclosed letter from thirteen women Ministers for Foreign Affairs to you concerning the worldwide threat of HIV/AIDS (see annex). The United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright organized this statement as part of our ongoing efforts to raise the level of attention given to combating this pandemic. We very much appreciate your continuing efforts in this area.

(*Signed*) Richard C. **Holbrooke**

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Annex to the letter dated 12 September 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We are writing as the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of thirteen nations, and as concerned women, to proclaim our joint resolve to combat the global scourge of HIV/AIDS. We are saddened to note that HIV/AIDS continues to ravage the developing world, where 95 per cent of global infections and deaths have occurred. The worldwide HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the continued, associated health challenges of other infectious diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis, threaten to rob multiple generations of the promise and hope of a new century.

Our Governments recognize that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is an urgent foreign policy issue with humanitarian, security, economic and development implications that threaten decades of hard-won progress, and which extends beyond the means and competence of any one nation or entity to counter. This is especially evident in the pandemic's current epicentre, Africa. We are cognizant, however, of the need to focus international attention on the emerging HIV/AIDS threat in Asia, Russia, the newly independent States, regions of northern Europe and parts of the Western Hemisphere, especially the Caribbean, as well.

We welcome the success of the recent HIV/AIDS conference in Durban, South Africa, and the urgency attached to tackling HIV/AIDS by African leaders, donors, international financial institutions and the private sector. We encourage all Heads of State to devote high-level political leadership and direction to the struggle against HIV/AIDS, not only in Africa, but around the world. Experience has shown that strong national leadership and open discussion of the problem are critically important to the fight against HIV/AIDS, and we call on all national leaders, not only health ministers, to join in the public fight against HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Secretary-General, our Governments are committed to supporting your call to stop and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, and to provide special assistance to children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. We recognize that support for this goal requires the dedication of significant financial and human resources, and we will strive to identify and dedicate those resources. We especially note the critical need to support the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), including the promotion of assistance to developing countries in their efforts to treat people infected with HIV/AIDS.

Finally, but by no means the least of our concerns, we as women note the special needs of women in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment. Recognizing the increasing number and growing proportion of women with HIV, we call upon the United Nations membership to take into account the need for the enhanced availability of education, testing, counselling, care and treatment designed to address the specific needs of women and girls. The destructive forces of the AIDS pandemic pose a fatal threat to young men and women during their productive years, and, in the case of women, in the reproductive process itself. In addition, we call for affordable, enhanced medical interventions aimed at lessening the risk factors associated with mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and which address the needs of mothers as well as their newborn.

We thank you, Mr. Secretary-General, for your leadership on this issue of global importance. We look forward to working with you in our common effort to overcome this global plague.

We ask that you circulate the present letter as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Benita **Ferrero-Waldner**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Austria

(*Signed*) Nadezhda **Mihailova**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Bulgaria

(*Signed*) Maria Soledad **Alvear Valenzuela**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Chile

(*Signed*) Maria Eugenia **Brizuela de Avila**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
El Salvador

(*Signed*) Dr. Andrea **Willi**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Principality of Liechtenstein

(*Signed*) Lydia **Polfer**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Luxembourg

(*Signed*) Lila **Ratsifandrihamanana**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Madagascar

(*Signed*) Lilian **Patel**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Malawi

(*Signed*) Rosario **Green**
Foreign Secretary
Mexico

(*Signed*) Nkosazana **Zuma**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of South Africa

(*Signed*) Maria E. **Levens**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Suriname

(*Signed*) Anna **Lindh**
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Sweden

(*Signed*) Madeleine K. **Albright**
Secretary of State
United States of America